

From: Steve Holdener
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/23/02 9:30am
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

To whom it may concern:

Providing *choice* in operating systems and productivity applications (such as Word and Excel) is the only way to truly free the public from Microsoft's monopolistic stranglehold. There are applications available for Windows as well as other operating systems which would suit most users' needs quite well. Unfortunately, Microsoft's market share is so great, many computer users feel that sending Word or Excel documents is a "standard" form of communication. Some projects have attempted to decode the secret formats of these files, but none have done so perfectly, and Microsoft tends to change them every few releases to ensure that this moving target is never hit. As long as these documents remain unreadable to other applications, users wishing to communicate with others (especially when in a supplier or vendor mode) are forced to use Microsoft products. They often, in turn, rely on these same mechanism for communicating with others. This effectively creates a word processor market, for example, open only to applications which can perfectly read and write the Microsoft Word file format. Of course, there is only one such application available.

To provide true freedom of choice for Americans, Microsoft-software-generated files must conform to an open standard, allowing other software to correctly read and write in the same format used by the Microsoft products. This is certainly feasible today; the recommended format would be XML, which is easily read on any computing platform. Therefore, I would recommend an addition to the section entitled "III. Prohibited Conduct":

To provide interoperability with non-Microsoft applications, Microsoft shall not use proprietary or closed formats for documents generated by its word processors, spreadsheets, and presentation applications (like PowerPoint). Rather, standard formats, agreed upon by an independent standards body, of which Microsoft will be a part, shall be used for the persistence or transmission of any of these documents.

Thank you.

Steven Holdener
1529 Louisville Ave.

St. Louis, MO 63139